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Abstract

The title of one of Sam Selvon's novels is Those Who Eat The Cascadura. The cascadura is a small ancient, reptilian looking fish which lives in swamps. It is considered to be a delicacy, and especially so when fixed as a curry. Legend or myth has it that if you eat the cascadura you will return to end your days in Trinidad. Did Sam believe in that myth? Do we sometimes foresee the future? Or, does wishing it make it come to pass?

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The title of one of Sam Selvon's novels is *Those Who Eat The Cascadura.* The cascadura is a small ancient, reptilian looking fish which lives in swamps. It is considered to be a delicacy, and especially so when fixed as a curry. Legend or myth has it that if you eat the cascadura you will return to end your days in Trinidad. Did Sam believe in that myth? Do we sometimes foresee the future? Or, does wishing it make it come to pass?

He died in Trinidad, was cremated, and his ashes buried there. It could have happened in England or Canada, but it did not. He rests besides members of his family in his hometown of San Fernando, and he was given a hero's funeral with all the pomp and ceremony that Trinidad could offer its native son. Once a 'Trini' always a 'Trini'. I am glad Sam returned to Trinidad, it would have been too lonely to be buried in England or Canada, both of which are far too cold for someone who loved the sun, loved his island, and loved his people. There is no longer a question of whether or not there is truth to the myth. He ate the cascadura, and he returned to Trinidad to end his days.

The first thought that crosses one's mind when a close friend dies - a friend who is one's own age - is one's own mortality. True or false? False - I think. His death has not led me to think of my mortality. Instead, I think of the days, the times we spent together. We met when we were sixteen and seventeen, and we met because his brother Dennis married my sister Betty. We have one nephew in common, we are writers, we both worked for the *Trinidad Guardian,* I as a reporter, Sam, as an inside man, he put together the Sunday section for the paper. He went to England, I came to the US at about the same time - around 1950.

Although he lived in London, and I in NYC or Michigan or California, we not only kept in touch by mail, but spent time with each other at the various literary conferences we attended: Trinidad, Guyana, Montreal, Toronto - and there were times when I visited with him, and he with me. We spent time in Scotland where he was a writer in residence. He arranged a lecture there for me, filled with colorful slides. That was before the day and age of video-cams. Later on I arranged for him to replace me for one semester at the University of California in San Diego, and he lived with us for fourteen weeks. The Atlantic Ocean stood between us, but our friendship continued. No matter how much time passed between visits, whenever we met it was merely a question of picking up where our correspondence left off. And now there is only

London in the early fifties. We swam in Bajan waters, ate flying fish and drank Mount Gay Rum, and then we were off to Trinidad...noisy Trinidad, where at night, even if you turned your radio off and pricked up your ears there was a low level sound of the radio station. During the day there was not only the radio, but each main street of the city was flooded with loud music. Each little store had a blaring loudspeaker booming out Calypso or Reggae music, and the same was true of all the mad taxis that plied the main roads of the island. Add to that the heat, the humidity, the sleepness nights swatting mosquitoes, and the rainy season.

We got into one of those 'gypsy' cabs, known for their mad drivers. We squeezed in between its passengers. Sam sat in front, next to the driver. As soon as we entered the cab, I knew that it was the wrong thing to do, the radio was blasting. Sam asked the driver in his usual polite soft-spoken way to turn down the volume. Perhaps the driver did not hear him, maybe he did, but chose to ignore Sam. Again Sam asked him to turn down the volume. This time the driver looked straight at him and sucked his teeth. Sam reached over and turned off the radio. Everyone in the taxi was stunned, both at his action, and the sudden peace and quiet, and we all knew something had to give.

'Stop the car...let me out!' Sam shouted, flinging some crumpled bills at the driver, who promptly pocketed them then turned on the radio again. The rest of us had little time to join him, it all happened so quickly, or were we just cowards?

I saw that lonely disgusted slightly hunched over figure as we drove on. He managed to catch up with us in Port of Spain. All he said in his disgruntled voice was, 'These noisy bastards. Can't stand silence, can't stand the quiet of their own thoughts!'

And the same thing was true in the streets of the city...loudspeakers everywhere, belting and belching out their deafening decibels. Why, I asked myself do we love noise? When did all of this happen? The answer was simple, Sam and I had been away too long. I had seen some of this in other Third World countries. How much we all loved the 'toys' of the electronic world, the play-things of other worlds. When I related this incident to other Trinis they were aghast. What Sam had done could have ended in a fight, a stabbing or shooting...or worse. No one in his right mind would dare to reach over and turn off a radio in a taxi.

'But Sam...you bold you know.' I said.

'Bold my arse...these bastards gone and ruin this place. No peace anywhere anymore...just noise, noise, noise. What ever happen to silence?', he said, not in anger, but more of a wistful longing for a time that was, and was gone forever, the time of our 'boy-days', the halcyon times of Trinidad...lost forever, replaced by something like a caged animal that had been set loose.

After a few days in Trinidad, we flew to Guyana and landed in the

middle of a tropical rain storm. The tarmac was flooded, the rain came down too fast to run off. We were met by people with large unbrellas bearing the logo of the air-line which promptly blew inside out. I think that some kind of reception was planned, but no one was interested. It occurred to me that I had never seen rainfall like this in my life. I had seen snow. I had seen hail stones. I had seen sleet, and I had seen many a rainy season on our small island. This was what a rainfall was like in a continent, for we were now on the South American continent, a huge land mass compared to our island home. The skies seemed to burst open through the great lightning bolts and the torrential rains came pouring through the great flashes of dark and open skies. We were soaked and water was running out of our shoes. The cool air-conditioned terminal was no relief, I began to shiver in my wet clothes and longed for a dry place.

One of the things about living in the tropics is that lighting a fire to keep warm, or to dry out is out of the question where it was already ninety degrees. I now wondered about the serene days of my childhood when playing in the rain was such great fun, such great sport.

There were cars waiting for us, and we were driven to a complex of houses, a small city, built especially to house the artists from the entire Caribbean. The first thing on our minds was to get into some dry clothes, and to get some sleep, it was about two in the morning. We no sooner turned off the lights when the mosquitoes descended. They were the largest I had ever seen. Or, had I forgotten what they were like when I was growing up in Trinidad? There were mosquito nets hung over the beds, and one had to make sure that one or two did not get in while one crept into bed with a feeling of 'at last', a bed, while we listened to the heavy pounding and pinging of the galvanised roof. What a wonderful sound that used to be as a child. I wondered what happened to the music the rain used to make as I lay in bed, wide awake, damp and tired. My wife went off to sleep immediately, and I could hear Shake Keen snoring. I wanted to smoke, but that would be difficult under the mosquito netting, so I tossed and turned, and then I heard Sam say, 'You up?'. I merely grunted, then he went out on the porch to smoke, and I joined him. There was a silence between us that spoke of fatigue, lack of sleep, and a feeling of what on earth we were doing in this place. We got back in our beds, and I saw Sam pull the sheets over his head as he lay like a corpse. We said good night again and tried for sleep. I do not know how long I slept, I do not know if I slept, but I was awakened by blaring music coming from a long shed which was put up for the festivities. It had a row of food stalls at either end, and a juke box, I later learned. The light of day came up very early, the rain had cleared away. The first blast of the juke box made us jump, and I could see Sam putting on his clothes, wordlessly. He went into the kitchen where there was a cutlass. I went to the porch to see where he was headed as he slouched to the shed.

I hardly thought that he would hurt anyone with it. But visions of Sam slashing the electric cord, sparks flying...this un-mechanically minded genius would never think to simply un-plug the juke box...and then the music stopped suddenly and I saw him coming back, cutlass in hand. He crawled back into bed and again pulled the covers over his head. 'Everything alright?' I asked. All he said was, 'These noisy bastards.'

The following morning at breakfast in the shed he was laughing and joking with the men who had respected his wish to turn off the juke box. His temper was cooled, and perhaps in part by the large serving of Cascadura, large and plentiful around Guyana's capital, Georgetown which is below sea-level and latticed by rivulets which ebb and flow with the tides of the ocean...perfect breeding for Cascadura...and mosquitoes.

Since there were four of us, Sam, myself and my wife and the poet Shake Keen (from St. Vincent) we were given a house to ourselves, and since we were four, we were given a car with our own chauffeur, around the clock. I have a picture of Sam sitting behind the wheel of the car, smiling that impish smile of his. The humor behind the picture lay in the fact that Sam had never learned how to drive. And while on the subject of the car and the chauffeur, it was Sam, who seeing the man sitting outside in the heat of the car, and who did not want him to feel like a 'servant' went out and fetched him. He was to join us in all of our activities, he was to have his meals and drinks with us, and our house was the most frequented...we had visitors night and day.

At another time, Sam had come to the US, one of the requirements of being a recipient of a Guggenheim grant. I was at Cape Cod for the Summer. After a week or two at the Mc.Dowell Colony, he joined us at the Cape where we had rented a sprawling barn-house overlooking the bay in North Truro. One evening at sunset we were at the pier in Provincetown and the sky was filled with kites...kites such as we had never seen in our lives, not in our 'boy-days'. Sam wanted to be part of that action. He decided that we would build a Mad Bull, a giant one which stood four feet high when finished. All of the kites we had seen were probably bought...ready-made. Ours would be singular in design, and was made by our own hands. We found some bamboo strips in a Japanese gift shop where we also found the right kind of paper. We got some heavy string, and tore up strips from a bed sheet for its tail. We worked at the frame each day, wondering as always if it would fly. And then came the time for choosing and fitting the paper into the empty spaces of the frame. We needed glue, and had none, but Sam remembered how to make a good paste boiling flour in water. Now he needed lime or lemon juice for the paste. I wondered, until he reminded me of how the many bugs at home would eat the kite paper...because of the paste. The addition of the lime juice would make it distasteful to them. I took about a week to finally finish the kite. We were like painters

working on a canvas...so much today, quit to let it dry, then move on to the other spaces. Meantime, neither of us had given any thought to transporting it to Provincetown, some four or five miles from Truro. We tried to get the kite inside the car...head-first, side-ways ever so gently, but it would not fit, so I drove, and Sam held the kite outside the car as we drove to the pier where we created quite a stir, and again his twinkle and impish grin came on, transporting him back to the years of our 'boy-days' as he explained to the curious onlookers the nature and origin of the MADBULL, emphasizing the fact that it was not 'store-bought' but made by hand...from scratch. My chief concern was, will it fly. If it didn't, it would take a dive...right into the sea. We got set with me holding the kite in an upright position, its long tail trailing as we waited for a great gust of wind. 'Leggo' (let-go) I heard him yell, and up went the kite, straight as an arrow. 'Like a bullet!' I heard him shout as the kite danced and buzzed, climbing into the sky with each tug of the string. The kite was called a MADBULL because of the sound it made when in flight. There were small sections of loose paper that fluttered like wings as the kite moved through the air, 'singing' as we called it, its song. Each evening we spent some time patching or strengthening sections of the kite for the following day's flying.

And then as the summer was drawing to an end, we began to wonder what we would do with the kite. I thought that we should just cut the string on the last day and let it wander off to sea. But Sam feared, and he was almost paranoid about it...that someone would find its frame at sea, and 'learn' its secret, his secret, and so we did not cut it loose. Sam crushed it to pieces on the beach the day before we left so that no one could duplicate his masterpiece.

In all of this, one may well wonder if we did not have any difference of opinion. We never talked about writing, his, mine, or the works of others our age. Yet, we did have differing views, views which we both knew would never be reconciled, and so we treated them as we treated each other, with mutual respect. We never had any heated dragged out arguments about them, yet they would surface from time to time.

One of the things we disagreed on was what I refer to as 'identity', a term I use when asked what my writing is all about. At a conference at York University to celebrate the 150th. year of the presence of East Indians in the Caribbean we were on the novelists' panel with four or five other writers. Frank Birbalsingh, writer, critic, professor and organiser of the conference was moderator of the panel, and his question was what we felt our writing was all about. My turn came first. I said 'identity' and went on to explain that I felt that we lived in something of a borrowed culture, bits and pieces of other peoples' culture. I could tell that Sam was annoyed, he could not wait to say his piece, and indeed his tone was an angry one. I cannot recall word for word what he said, but it went something like this as he broke into West Indian dialect. He

did not address me directly, his comments were directed to Frank, who had asked the question. He said, 'Well...I don't know what that word means, but what I know is that I know who I am...I know what I write about, and all this talk about identity, or exile (another term of disagreement) I am not an exile...Napoleon was exiled. I was not'.

We had lunch after the panel and we never got to re-hash or to clarify just what we felt or meant, instead, we talked about our 'boy-days'.

I recall Sam telling about employment, or looking for work when he first got to England. He, like myself, thinking ourselves to be Indian, thought that a good place to look, some Indian business or agency would be a good place to look for work. Sam told about meeting with Krishna Menon at the Indian Embassy. Menon, even before interviewing him said something like this to him: 'You people from the West Indies seem to feel that you are Indians, that India owes you something. You know nothing of Indian culture or ways, few of you speak our languages etc. etc'. Needless to say he did not get a job with the Indian Embassy despite his qualifications as a journalist, poet, novelist and dramatist.

I also had turned to, not the Embassy, but the UN Delegation which was in the same building as the Embassy. I had heard of a messenger's job with the delegation to the UN, and one of the reasons for looking to the UN Delegation was because I was on a foreign student's visa, which meant that I was not allowed to work in the US, unless the funds came from some non US source. I did get the messenger job for the Summer, but I cannot say that I was treated with the same courtesies that other Indians were treated with. I too, perhaps in more subtle ways was made to understand that I was not Indian, and was looked upon as some sort of anomaly or freak. It was also suggested that I change my name from 'Khan', a muslim name to a Hindu name. One member of the delegation (I had to deliver the morning newspapers and the mail to the delegates in their hotel rooms) seeing me for the first time addressed me in Hindi.I muttered, I stuttered. I did understand him, but I knew that I could not hold a conversation with him in Hindi. Like most second generation people, I understood what my parents were saying, but replied in English. He then proceeded to tell me that although there were many things - facial structure, color or complexion - all of which were clearly Indian, he could tell from the way I walked...just the few steps into his suite...that I did not walk like Indian people, and this was said in the most cutting manner.

Perhaps I use the word 'identity' in my own specific way, however, I was, as Sam was, if not in our writing, coming to terms with who we were, with our sense of 'identity'. It could also be argued that living abroad forces one to see oneself in a different light - not only the way in which we see ourselves, but the way(s) in which others see us.

Living abroad is one thing. Living abroad as a foreign student in the US is another. And living abroad trying to earn enough money to

support a family and still have the time and energy to write is still another matter. What artist does not know the joys and sorrows of that life? Yes, there were glorious days; the acceptance of a novel or short story by a publisher, a good review, a luncheon paid for by one's publisher, and the thought or feeling that you would like to ask for a 'doggie bag' to take home the 'left-overs' to your wife and child. And there were other lean mean days.

I remember Sam telling about going through the cold London fog to borrow five pounds from George Lamming. Apparently neither George nor Sam could afford the luxury of a telephone, so he had to take his chances of finding him home. He, Sam, and his family lived in what I believe is called a 'bed-sitter', one room whose only source of heat was a gas ring. I believe it was also used to cook their meals. After he got the five pounds, he then had to worry about finding some shop or store which might still be open so that he could make change...get shillings to insert in the gas meter. One did not go up to strangers in the middle of the night to ask them to change a five pound note. Indeed, I recall him telling how people shunned you because they knew that you wanted shillings and they wanted to hold on to theirs, and here is the way he put it, 'Boy...people see you comin', and sometimes they turn away or look away because they see a black man. It's as if some of them know that you want to make change, some of them just frighten...but nobody want to part with their shillings'.

As it turned out, he had to get some food for himself and his family and was able to get the shillings to take home to keep his family warm...and fed.

I was able to share one of my lean mean days with him. My wife and I and our little girl lived in a tenement on the upper East Side of NYC. While I could work full time for the delegation during that summer, once school resumed I was allowed to work twenty hours a week, which I did, putting away books in the library of the school I attended. We were often broke, with no one to turn to for a loan. And this was not because we did not have friends, it was because all the people we knew were as broke as we were. One day my wife and I decided to walk the streets of the city...to look for money. We found one dime, one penny, and an unused ten cent stamp. I could also tell tales of washing my clothes in the kitchen bath-tub with its lion's claws, clothes which should have been dry cleaned. The rent for the apartment was thirty dollars a month, a steal and a find in those days, impossible nowadays. Today, I still wonder how I got as much done as I did. I wrote most of my first novel in that apartment. I did not have to worry about the cost of typewriter ribbons or paper, I wrote by hand on the cheapest yellow pulp paper which now disintegrates at the touch of the hand.

Although Sam lived on one side of the Atlantic, and I on the other in NYC (he later moved to Western Canada,I, to California, then back to

NYC) we kept each other informed of everything that went on in our lives through our letters. And then when we met, we were able to do a different kind of catching up going over face to face what we had said in our letters. We were like those two sages in an old joke who sat under a tree. They both knew everything that the other did. As time went by, they felt that there was no need for elaborate communication. They both knew all the same things, all the same stories, all the same jokes. And so, instead of telling each other some joke, in so many words, one of them would shout, 'Joke number one hundred and fifty-five.' And the other, knowing the joke would burst out in peals of laughter, and this is one way, one analogy to describe how close we were, or how well we knew each other.

But there were details that we did not know about our backgrounds. I knew my grand-parents on both sides of my family, I knew what part of India they came from. Sam did not know as much as I did about his ancestors. He was not clear about his father's background, how he came by the name Selvon. He knew that his father, an East Indian had come to Trinidad from Martinique, and he guessed that the name Selvon must have come from French origins. But what was it derived from?

During one of his visits with me at Cornell University, I took him to one of those gala dinners that the Indian Students' Association was giving for one of their major professors. One of the Indian students was familiar with the major Indian languages, and so I introduced him to Sam, and we posed the question to him. Was there some Indian name he could think of that could be the origins of Selvon? He thought that the name could have been 'Salwan'.

Some time later while I was still working on my first novel, I needed a name for a particularly annoying character, a lawyer who I named Mr. Salwan. We both had a good laugh about it, and to this day it remains a private joke, just between us two. It was the kind of joke, if it can be called a joke, that we both loved, and there were times when I did indeed address him 'Salwan'.

His mother was white, or half white, the daughter of Scottish or English estate overseers, and whose maiden name was Dixon (Sam's middle name) led Sam to look into her ancestry. He told of discovering that there was a castle somewhere in England or Scotland to which he was legal heir and planned to show up at its moat one day to lay claim to his inheritance. I think he liked the image more than the fact of carrying out his threat, while I, on the other hand had an image taken no doubt from Don Quixote. I doubt that he carried out his threat, it was much more fun to merely speculate on it.

There are two aspects of Sam's work that are highly praised; his sense of humor and his use of dialect, and we never spoke about them. I do not think that his was a reasoned rational choice, it simply was. Indeed he spoke in Trinidadian dialect, no matter what the situation or occasion. I

did the same with the use of dialect despite the rejections and (bad) advice from publishers and friends, who felt that, 'Dialect is hard on the reader'. 'Dialect will slow down the reader.' 'You may find that you will need a glossary at the end of the novel'. Such were the comment and criticism, but we persisted.

For myself, I have wondered about the ability to recall, to re-create the pidgin of Trinidad. Sam was first married to a Guyanese, and it is possible that he and his wife spoke in dialect among themselves. I, on the other hand, was not married to, nor lived with someone from the Carribean. Yet, after forty years, I can, as Sam could, shift from Standard English to pidgin, and I still wonder about the magic of language. I recall a conversation with Austin Clarke (Barbadian novelist who now lives in Toronto) who had apparently made some attempts to write in 'Bajan' dialect. He told me some years ago how he used to go to Sam's work, and mine, trying to figure out how we did it, how he could get into using dialect. He finally gave up, yet he too wondered how anyone living abroad for so many years could still recall and re-create all the subtlety; the nuances and rhymes of our dialect, and finally how to present them so that they did not 'slow down the reader', so that they did not seem labored and over-worked, so that one would not need a glossary at the end of the novel.

Sam may well have been surrounded by West Indians all those years...The Lonely Londoners. I do not have any West Indian friends to speak of. My only West Indian friend and colleague is Lloyd Brown who lives in Los Angeles, he is a poet and scholar and originally from Jamaica. I have had to ask that foolish question that semanticists and psychologists ask all the time. 'What language do you dream in?'. I do not have an answer, and Sam couldn't care less. He was the only person with whom I could slip into Trinidadian dialect, except for those times when I visit the Caribbean where it would sound pretentious to sport an English or American accent...which would be difficult anyway because we all have vestiges of our homeland's pidgin in our speech.

Although I was plagued by questions of this kind that had to do with language or dialect, Sam never was. Of if he was, we never dwelt upon it. We would sometimes surprise each other - with some pleasure - of some long forgotten word or term we grew up with, like the word 'Io'. I had said that when we got done with the MADBULL, we could 'Io' the kite...cut the string and let it sail away, and I still wonder where the Trinis got that word. Sam, who loved to play Scrabble, and who played the game with a dictionary to check out other players, or prove the legitimacy of his words pointed out that 'Io' was a good word, one to be found in the dictionary. Its meaning is as follows: a. A cry of pleasure or triumph. b. A Greek Mythological figure, a maiden loved by Zeus. c. In chemistry an abbreviation for the chemical Ionium. And there are many other words perhaps taken from French or Spanish that had worked

their way into the pidgin of Trinidad. I do not know to this day where the word 'chook' came from. It means to stick, to prick with a pin. In one of his later novels he used that word and had to put up a great battle with his publishers, insisting that although 'chook' was not in the dictionary, it was the writer's way of bringing new life to an ongoing language. We now see the word 'chook' in print.

The other much praised aspect of his work is his sense of humor and his use of it. He found humor in the simple, the ordinary, the plain. And he did so because he was a funny man himself. There are those who feel that he laughed at others - at their expense, but I do not think that that was so. His ability to laugh, talk, joke and listen to the people he immortalised was a genuine one. If he laughed, he laughed *with* them because he felt one with them, and he knew them well.

On one of our visits to Trinidad, we were supposed to do a reading at a bookstore in San Fernando, his home-town. The crowd was too large to hold it in the book store, so the reading was held in the Public Library. We found seats and after the opening speaker's remarks, the lights were lowered. When they went back up, the podium had been changed into a stage - with no props, just a couple of actors. As a surprise to Sam, and us, the audience, they began to do a skit based upon one of Sam's short stories from *Ways of Sunlight* The entire house roared, and there was Sam, looking at, listening to his lines, now memorized and delivered with what must have pleased him, he was rolling with laughter. The skit was based upon 'Brackley and the Bed'...filled with all the pathos and humor of the lost and lonely West Indian trying to find the meaning of life in chilly London. Rumor has it that a film is being made of *Lonely Londoners*. It has not been released to the best of my knowledge, but I hope that Sam was able to see it or parts of it before he died. He was involved with the writing of the screenplay.

Writers of fiction, dramatists, actors, comedians - all must have something in common - not only in what they do, but the way in which they react to responses from their audiences. For example, we all wonder about the moments that make people laugh or cry because it sometimes happens that people seem to laugh at a moment which seemed to be one of horror, or sadness, and literary critics are quick to point out that *they*, not the writer - know better where the humor lies.

I have heard Sam read from his work many times, and he is one of the few writers I know, who, while reading his own lines became so animated, so funny and witty as to break out in peals of laughter that caused him to stop reading until he could re-compose himself. He seemed to know best where the essence of his humor lay.

His sense of humor in his work is one thing. But what was his sense of humor like? And how much he wished to share this with others. On one of my visits with him in London, I remember poring over the Sunday papers with him, he loved the Flintstones. Not only did he love the

Flintstones, but he wanted to share this with me. I neither like nor dislike the Flintstones, and I said so.

'Boy...how you don't like the Flintstones? You see people driving cars and carts with square wheels...you don't find that sort of thing funny?'

He would go through the comic strip and burst out laughing which I'm sure he would do even if there was no one around. And he laughed at the Flintstones as he did when he read from his own work. At least I had no problem with *his* humor, and I cannot help but remember how much he wanted to share...to explain just why the Flintstones were so funny to him.

I now live in New York - surrounded by a vast West Indian community, I did not plan it this way. The huge immigrations from the Caribbean seem to have followed me to this cold north-land. In the neighbourhood where I teach English at a college heavily populated by West Indian immigrants or their children, I can find black-pudding, mangoes, avocados, breadfruit, cassava, yam, dasheen, water-cress, callaloo bush, okra...and a small Korean fish store where I can buy conch, king fish and red snapper. Perhaps I too will return to the green and warmth of Trinidad. The cascadura often calls, and one day, when I'm ready, I'm sure that I'll find the little creatures in the market stalls, somewhere where reggae blares in the streets, where Trini, Bajan, Jamaican and other dialects compete with each other - because the cascadura of our 'place', of our childhood and our 'boy-days' calls us all.